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ABSTRACT

This paper contains the scripts of five skits illustrating conspicuous errors on the part of writing tutors trying to assist undergraduate writers. Although the dialogue is fictitious and the situations slightly exaggerated, the skits delineate real problems that have been observed by the directors in actual tutoring sessions. The skits are designed to be used in a workshop or training session, during which small groups of tutors would first read them to determine the mistake illustrated and then write a skit of their own correcting the tutoring mistake; finally, they would act out both skits for the larger group. The skits illustrate a range of mistakes a tutor can make: failing to listen; imposing his or her own ideas on the student; offering advice about how to rewrite the paper when it is due in a couple of hours; and being unwilling to work through sensitive issues concerning a writing topic. (TB)

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ED 377 488

John R. Edlund

Tutor Skits

Attached are some skits we used in training this summer. They are a bit exaggerated, but we had fun. I found that tutors were still talking about them two weeks later, and that they probably made tutors more conscious of their own tutoring behaviors than any other technique we've used. In the past I have not been a skit type director, but I am changing my style.

I hope others find them useful or amusing.

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TUTORING SCENARIOS

Each of the following tutoring scenarios represents a tutoring mistake. Although the dialogue is fictitious and the situations slightly exaggerated, these are real problems which have been observed by the directors in actual tutoring sessions in our center.

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Read the scenario assigned to your group. Figure out what is going wrong and how it might be corrected or better handled. Then make plans to act out two versions of your scenario for the assembled staff--the original version and a new version that demonstrates a better way to handle the situation.

Scenario I

T: Hi, how can I help you today?
S: Well, I wrote this paper, but...
T: OK, let me see it. Hmmm... It's short, it needs development, and I think you need to reorganize it. See...
S: But the teacher said...
T: You can't pass the WPE unless you learn to develop your ideas. Now this sentence here: "Smith lives in a society where there are no personal freedoms or pleasures." Can you give an example of a personal freedom or pleasure?
S: I don't know. The teacher...
T: Oh come now, surely you can think of personal freedom! I want you to sit here until you think of a personal freedom!
S: I think I'd better go now. The paper is due in two hours, and I need to proofread it.
T: Well, you shouldn't wait until the last minute to come here. Now there is no time for development and revision.
S: But it's supposed to be a one page summary! I've been trying to tell you that!
T: Oh, I see.

Scenario II

T: Hi, what can I do for you?

S: I'm writing this paper about my family. It's for English 095.

T: Let me see the topic. "Write an essay about a family conflict. Describe how the conflict started, who was responsible and how it was resolved."

S: It seems kind of personal. I'm embarrassed to write about it and I don't know what to do.

T: Well, did you think of a conflict?

S: Well, yes. I had a fight with my father. He doesn't like my boyfriend, and he thinks I shouldn't go out with anyone until I finish college.

T: OK, how did the conflict start?

S: My boyfriend called and my father answered. He hung up the phone and started shouting and...oh, I don't know.

T: You don't know what happened?

S: I don't want to write about it.

T: Is there another conflict you could write about?

S: I don't know.

T: Well, I don't know your family. I can't help you think of what to write about.

S: OK. I guess I'd better go.

T: Come back when you think of something to say.

S: Alright.

Scenario III

T: Hi, how are you today?

S: Fine.

T: What do you want to work on?

S: This is an essay about the Clinton health plan. I want to show that it would be a disaster for small businesses.

T: Do you really think it would be? I thought it was a good plan.

S: Maybe I should change my idea.

T: I think that if we don't have health reform, the country will go bankrupt.

S: Oh.

T: Well, let's see your paper.

S: I think it's all wrong.

T: Well, first we have to change your thesis statement.

S: OK.

T: Now we have to change all of the evidence.

S: OK.

Scenario IV

T: Hi, hot weather we're having, isn't it?

S: Yeah.

T: How can I help you?

S: I want you to proofread this paper for me.

T: OK, have you seen our proofreading policy? We don't do proofreading.

S: You don't?

T: No. We want you to do your own work. We don't correct papers for you. We aren't a proofreading service.

S: You aren't? What good is this service? I need some help!

T: First we'll help you organize and develop your paper.

S: But I have to turn it in in an hour!

T: That's not my fault is it? You should have come in earlier.

S: I need someone to correct my grammar. This is ridiculous!

T: Here, read the policy.

S: I don't want to read the policy. I'm going to leave.

T: Wait. I'll help you. You misunderstood.

S: But you said you wouldn't help me!

Scenario V

T: Hi, what do you want to work on?

S: My grammar is bad.

T: Let me see the paper. Oh, I'm having trouble understanding this. What do you mean here?

S: I am trying to say about my sister. That she is very kindness to my mother.

T: Look this is a singular subject, so it needs a singular verb. The third person singular takes an "s" on it. You are in college. You should know this.

S: Yes, my English is very bad.

T: And here, this is plural. You can't say "She carry all my book to school when I forget them."

S: Yes.

T: Didn't you have any English classes in high school? Didn't they teach you any grammar?

S: I came when I was twelve. There was war in my country so I couldn't go to school.

T: And your verb tenses. You are shifting all over the place.

S: All over the place?

T: You shift from present to past and back again.

S: Oh.

T: I am going to correct all this. I want you to study the changes so you won't make these mistakes again. There is no excuse for mistakes like this in a college level paper.

S: OK.